

Section 1.3: The Use and Abuse of Drugs

Drugs and Drug Claims

- That drugs cause chemical changes in the body, which can lead to addiction.
 - That people addicted to drugs may suffer withdrawal symptoms without them.
 - That heroin and cocaine are really addictive drugs.
 - That performance-enhancing drugs are drugs that can improve a person's performance in sport.
 - That anabolic steroids increase muscle growth and stimulants increase heart rate and how these can make a person better at sport.
 - That some performance-enhancing drugs are illegal, some can be prescribed legally but that all are banned by sporting bodies.
 - The issues surrounding the use of performance-enhancing drugs and how to evaluate them.
 - That statins reduce the risk of heart and circulatory diseases and how to evaluate data on them.
 - How to evaluate claims about prescribed and non-prescribed drugs.
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Testing Medicinal Drugs

- That scientists are developing new drugs all the time, which have to be tested before use.
 - That new medicinal drugs are first tested in the laboratory on human cells, tissues and animals.
 - That drugs have to be tested to make sure they work, are safe and that the best dosage is known.
 - That after lab testing, drugs are tested in clinical trials on healthy volunteers at low doses. They're then tested on ill volunteers to find the optimum dose of a drug (the dose the drug works best at).
 - What a placebo is (a substance that's similar to the drug being tested but that doesn't do anything) and why they are used in clinical trials (to make sure the drug works).
 - That in a double-blind trial neither the doctors nor the volunteers know which volunteers have been given the drug and who has been given the placebo.
 - That the drug thalidomide was made for use as a sleeping pill. However, it was also used to relieve morning sickness in pregnant women without being tested for that use. As a result the drug caused abnormal limb development in many babies and even death. The drug was banned and now drug testing is much more thorough. Thalidomide is now used to treat leprosy and some cancers.
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Recreational Drugs

- That heroin, ecstasy and cannabis are all illegal recreational drugs which can cause heart and circulatory system problems, and that cannabis may increase the risk of developing mental health problems in some people.
- That people use illegal recreational drugs for many reasons.
- The main opinions on why some people who use cannabis (a soft drug) may progress to using hard drugs.
- That nicotine and alcohol are legal recreational drugs and can cause many health problems.
- That legal drugs have a greater impact on people and society because far more people use them.